



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

L. Preston Bryant, Jr.  
Secretary of Natural Resources

**Department of Historic Resources**  
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29 May 2009

Mr. Chris Caperton  
Fairfax County Department of Planning & Zoning  
Planning Division  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035-5509

RE: Draft Master Plan for the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Site  
Lorton, Fairfax County  
VDHR File No. 1998-1786

Dear Mr. Caperton:

The Department of Historic Resources (DHR) has received for our review and comment the revised Master Plan for the Laurel Hill adaptive reuse site at the former Lorton Reformatory and Penitentiary in Fairfax County, Virginia. In a letter dated 3 November 2008, the DHR reacted to the first draft of the Master Plan. In that correspondence we expressed concerns regarding aspects of the proposal especially the construction of surface parking lots in the courtyard area of Zones 1 and 3, additional new parking closely adjacent to historic buildings, the introduction of hyphens between the dormitory wings in Zone 1, and the proposed demolition of portions of the Penitentiary wall.

We are pleased that the revised Master Plan attempts to address some of our issues. For example, the surface parking planned for courtyard in Zone 1 has been removed. Similarly, the parking in the yard of the Penitentiary (Zone 3) and around the periphery of the historic buildings has been reduced from its original density. Finally, we notice that the hyphens between dormitory wings in the Reformatory area (Zone 1) are now missing from the new plan. Despite these improvements, however, we still have reservations about the Master Plan and the extent of the proposed changes to the historic character and fabric of the Lorton Correctional Center. Please note that the follow comments are offered by the DHR in its dual role as a reviewer pursuant to the terms of the existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the DHR, and other consulting parties; as well as our role in the review of the project proponent's application for state and federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits.

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Although the density of new townhomes in Zone 2 appears to have been reduced, the number of units within the historically sensitive portion of the Reformatory still seems excessive. We recommend relocating the townhouses farther to the perimeter of the prison complex, thereby preserving the existing baseball field and green space. We understand that this is a concern that has been raised by others as well. You should be aware that the baseball field is mentioned in the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Lorton Correctional Center as a contributing landscape element to the historic property. Demolishing the baseball field, therefore, could be considered an adverse effect under the terms of the existing MOA and may also jeopardize the availability of the Rehabilitation Tax Credits. This is also true for the planned demolition of other contributing buildings and structures such as removal of portions of the prison wall. The Penitentiary wall is a character-defining feature of the former prison. Removing or otherwise altering large portions of it would constitute an adverse effect and, therefore, potentially not make the project eligible for the tax credits.

The remaining parking in the Penitentiary yard, we believe, is still incompatible with the design and character of the historic property. As with the baseball field, the Penitentiary yard is specifically listed in the National Register nomination as an important landscape feature. New construction in the yard is problematic.

There are items that the Master Plan concept in its current form does not address. For example, other than a few perspective renderings, there are no design plans provided for our review and comment of the proposed new construction. We will need to have the opportunity to consider these designs when available. Additionally, there are two areas on the site plan designated "Retail Pad Site" and "Mixed Use Pad Site". We will require additional information about what is planned in these areas.

Thank you for providing the revised Master Plan for our review. Please continue to consult with the DHR about the issues we raised in this letter and as your plan develops.

If you have any questions about our comments, please contact me at (804) 367-2323, Ext. 114.

Sincerely,



Marc Holma, Architectural Historian  
Office of Review and Compliance

C: Ms Linda Blank, Preservation Planner, County of Fairfax  
Ms Audrey Tepper, NPS  
Mr. Neal McBride